

PROCTOR'S LANDING.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

A report showing the necessity for military defences at Proctor's Landing.

JANUARY 22, 1855.—Laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 19, 1855.

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 16th instant, "that the Secretary of War be instructed to report to this House whether any, and if any, what military defences are necessary at Proctor's Landing, at the terminus of the Mexican Gulf railway in Louisiana, for the protection of the country," I have the honor to transmit you a report of the Chief Engineer giving the required information.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JEFFERSON DAVIS,
Secretary of War.

HON. LINN BOYD,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 18, 1855.

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 16th instant, inquiring "whether any, and if any, what military defences are necessary at Proctor's Landing, at the terminus of the Mexican Gulf railway in Louisiana," I have the honor to report that a battery having a fire competent to prevent the approach of boats to the landing, together with an inaccessible tower for the accommodation of the garrison, will afford a sufficient defence for the position.

From this landing to the city of New Orleans the distance is 28 miles; the road is one of the best in the country; and there is now no

obstacle of any kind, natural or artificial, to hinder an enemy (landing from boats at Proctor's) from marching up to the city, with troops of all kinds, with their artillery and baggage. This is the only avenue of approach now without any defences. But it is plain that this remaining unguarded, all our efforts elsewhere may be neutralized. The enemy, turning away from the various defended channels of access, will seek the one which is open to his advance. Why this avenue was not provided for in the original defensive system for New Orleans I am not able to divine; but it is now incumbent upon us to close it at the earliest day practicable.

The water being shoal, the lake is navigable only for small steamers and boats; hence our preventive means need be only upon a reduced scale. The total cost of the battery and tower specified was estimated, when they were designed some years since, at \$100,000. Allowing for increase of prices, I think it likely that the works may be now completed for \$125,000; provided this sum be appropriated in a single grant, so that we may be able to avoid the expenses arising from interrupted and protracted operations. The defences can be finished in about a year from the time when we get possession of the proposed site of the work.

The importance of occupying this position has been several times urged upon Congress by this department; as, for instance, November 1, 1845, February 27, 1846, and March 18, 1854.

The resolution is returned herewith.

I am, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

JOS. G. TOTTEN,

Brevet Brig. Gen. and Col. Eng.

HON. JEFFERSON DAVIS,

Secretary of War.